



## A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

### מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

#### פרשת וישלח

וַיֵּרָא יַעֲקֹב מְאֹד וַיִּצָּר לוֹ, וַיַּחֲץ אֶת הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ וְכוּ' לְשֵׁנֵי מַחֲנֹת.

וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יַעֲקֹב יֹאמַר עוֹד שְׁמִי כִּי אִם יִשְׂרָאֵל, כִּי שָׁרִיתָ עִם אֱלֹקִים וְעַם אַנְשִׁים וַתִּנְכַּל. (בראשית לב, ח, כט)  
*And Yakov became very frightened, and it distressed him. So he divided the people with him ... into two camps. He said, "No longer will it be said that your name is Yakov, but Yisroel, for you have striven with the Divine and with men and you have overcome."* (Bereishis 32:8, 29)

This week's *Sidrah* begins with Yakov Avinu's attempt to reconcile with Eisav. Yakov did not rely solely on his righteousness but took significant spiritual and practical measures to ensure his safety. One of the strategies Yakov adopted out of fear was to divide his people into two camps. This way, if one camp were to fall, the other would certainly survive. The night before the critical meeting with Eisav, Yakov found himself alone when he wrestled with the Angel of Eisav. When the Angel realised he could not defeat Yakov, he dislocated Yakov's thighbone. It was then that Yakov learned his name would be changed to Yisroel, signifying that he had prevailed against both the angel and men.

The Sefer Hamaspik l'Ovdei Hashem, authored by R' Avraham ben HaRambam, raises an intriguing question: Surely, Yakov possessed an extraordinary level of *bitachon* in Hashem. He had been forced to leave his father's household with nothing, as the *possuk* states: *כִּי בְמִקְלִי עֲבַרְתִּי אֶת הַיַּרְדֵּן הַזֶּה*, *for with my staff I crossed this Yarden* (32:11). Yakov's travel from Beer Sheva to Charan was indeed difficult. He did not have an animal to ride, a sword for protection, or even a friend for companionship; all he had was a stick in his hand. Nevertheless, his faith and service of Hashem were complete. Given this, why was he so afraid of Eisav? Why does the Torah tell us: *וַיֵּרָא יַעֲקֹב מְאֹד וַיִּצָּר לוֹ*, *and Yakov became very frightened, and it distressed him*. What was the reason for his great fear, where was his great *madreigah* of *bitachon*?

Similarly, in last week's *Sidrah*, we see that Yakov experienced great fear of Lavan and his sons. When Lavan questioned Yakov about his sudden decision to flee, Yakov replied: *כִּי יִרְאֵתִי כִּי אֶמְרֹתִי פֶן תִּגְזֹל*, *because I was afraid, for I said, perhaps you might steal your daughters from me* (31:31). Given Yakov's strong levels of *bitachon*, why was he so fearful about losing his wives?

The above difficulty becomes even more pronounced when we consider instances in which other great people acted with absolute faith in Hashem, expecting nothing short of a miracle. In Nach, we learn of Yonason's courageous raid on the Pelishtim army. Accompanied only by his armour-bearer, he declared: *כִּי אֵין לָהּ מַעְצוֹר לְהוֹשִׁיעַ בְּרַב אוֹ בְּמַעַט*, *for nothing prevents Hashem from saving, whether through many or through few* (Shmuel I 14:6). He pressed on, even though the situation demanded a miracle for success.

Similarly, we find Dovid HaMelech, who acted extraordinarily when he faced the mighty giant Golias. Armed with only a few pebbles and a slingshot, he stood ready to confront Golias. Dovid even refused the armour that Shaul offered him, stating: *לֹא אוֹכֵל לָלֶכֶת בָּאֵלֶּה כִּי לֹא נִסִּיתִי*, *I cannot walk with these, for I am not accustomed to them* (ibid 17:39). The Targum Yonason explains the phrase *כִּי לֹא נִסִּיתִי* in

a way that contrasts with the literal understanding, interpreting the word נִסִּי' to relate to the term נֶס, *miracle*. Dovid, with full faith that Hashem would perform a *nes*, chose not to approach Golias as a well-armed warrior, believing that doing so would obscure the magnitude of the miracle.

These instances highlight the above question: Surely, Yakov Avinu's level of *bitachon* was no less than that of Yonason or Dovid. So, why was Yakov so terribly afraid of Lavan and Eisav?

R' Avrohom ben HaRambam addresses the apparent contradiction in these approaches by explaining that one cannot rely on miracles without Divine prophecy or assurance from Hashem. Yakov had not received any heavenly message that he would be granted salvation; therefore, he responded with natural fear and took necessary precautions. In contrast, Dovid and Yonason acted with confidence, relying on miracles because they had prophetically sensed that Hashem was with them. After recognising Hashem's infinite support, they were permitted to behave in ways that could have otherwise been seen as reckless.

He explains that Yakov later also received a Heavenly assurance after wrestling with the Angel. The Angel declared: כִּי שָׁרִיתָ עִם אֱלֹהִים וְעִם אָנָשִׁים וַתִּנְוָךְ, *for you have striven with the Divine and with men and you have overcome*. Rashi explains that the phrase וְעִם אָנָשִׁים refers to Yakov's triumph over Lavan and Eisav. Thus, this prophetic message was a confirmation of Hashem's protection. Just as Yakov had overcome the challenges posed by Lavan, so too he would prevail over Eisav.

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* notes we can solve a glaring question regarding the Torah's account of the fateful meeting between Yakov's family and Eisav. As mentioned earlier, one of Yakov's preparations for confronting Eisav was to divide his family into two camps. However, when he ultimately encountered Eisav, the entire family came together as one group (as implied in the *pessukim*). Why did Yakov change from his original plan?

According to the above explanation, the answer is straightforward. After Yakov wrestled with the Angel and received Divine reassurance of salvation and victory, he no longer needed to be cautious. With the promise of deliverance from Eisav, he could place his complete trust in Hashem.

In the Chanukah story, the Chashmonaim waged war against the powerful and great Greek army. Confronting such a formidable enemy might have seemed suicidal; how could they possibly hope for a miraculous outcome? According to the above concept, it seems that only after they sensed Hashem's presence with them did they embark on such a mission. This Divine assurance provided them with the courage and determination needed to confront a well-trained army that numbered in the tens of thousands, despite being vastly outnumbered.

This understanding sheds light on the phrase וְעַל הַגְּבוּרוֹת, *and for the mighty deeds*, found in the *tefillah* prayer of Al HaNissim. We are expressing our gratitude to Hashem for granting the Chashmonaim the strength of character and bravery that enabled them to move forward against overwhelming odds. Such motivation could only have been inspired by a heavenly gift of encouragement and reassurance.